

# THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT

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## EDITORIAL

THE crucifix which represents our Lord as *regnans a ligno* is not seen so often as the more ordinary one which shows him as he was on that first bitter Good Friday, the divine victim nailed to the cross. There he is stripped, naked and humiliated, the crown of thorns, a crown of shame and insult, upon his head. But here, in this other form of crucifix, the image of Christ is clothed in the priest's alb and crossed stole, wearing a crown not of thorns but of gold, a King's crown. He is on the cross, it is true, his arms outstretched, the nail-marks in his hands and feet, to remind us of the work he wrought, surrounded by mockery and weeping in the three hours' agony of Calvary. This crucifix however shows us much more than that, it shows us the Christ who died, but also the Christ who rose from the dead in triumph over death, who now lives and reigns and rules in the heavenly places as King; 'for in that he died he died unto sin once, but in that he liveth he liveth unto God' (Rom. 6, 10).

As we approach the season of Advent which prepares us for the coming of the Word made flesh at Christmas, as St John the Baptist, the forerunner of the Messiah, prepared the way for his coming long ago, we need to take in at a glance, as it were, the whole significance of that coming, a significance summed up in the crucifix which represents our Lord as *regnans a ligno*. We see there vividly depicted, who he is, what he wrought for us in his earthly life and what he now does for us where he sits at God's right hand.

For he is the eternal Son of God; in him all things created took their being, heavenly and earthly, visible and invisible. All things were created through him and in him, who is the true likeness of the invisible God (Col. 1, 15-16). In him we ourselves were created, and the material world around us of which we are a part, the things we see and touch and use. The things invisible also were his creation, the unseen spiritual world that lies within and around us, the home of God's powerful spirits, the angels. To that world belong also the mysterious soul, our own immortal life principle, and the grace by which God has trans-



formed its life. In Christ, God's Word, all these created things subsist.

For our sakes he became man. He entered our human life to share it with us, to make himself one with us that being one with him, we might be 'partakers of the divine nature'. The Word was made flesh. He took to himself a human nature; a mind to think with humanly, and a will to be used with human obedience and love. He crowned his earthly life of perfect obedience to his Father's will with an act of supreme obedience; he was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. By that death he set us free from the power of evil.

Now that he sits at God's right hand, we know that he is not in some far-off heaven remote from our concerns. For he is with us as he promised, even to the consummation of the world. As St Paul tells us, he is the head of his Body, the Church (Col. 1, 18), and we are his members, united with him by the power of grace which flows from his Cross. He lives in us in virtue of his life within the Mystical Body, his Church. The head communicates a constant increase of life to the members and this communication takes place principally through the Mass. There he is both priest and victim and there by his perpetual offering of himself he makes available to us the fullness of his redemptive power. By the power which flows from the cross through the Mass Christ our high priest lives in us and we in him.

The first Christians had a deep and abiding sense that if their lives were to be possessed by Christ our Lord, if he was to live and reign and rule in them supreme, then they must be wholly conformed to the pattern of his earthly life; they must die with him in order to share his life. He himself had said, 'If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me' (Luke 9, 23). St Paul was also to say, 'All we who are baptized in Christ Jesus are baptized into his death. For we are buried together with him by baptism into death, that as Christ is risen from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also may walk in newness of life' (Romans 6, 4).

This sense of their life in Christ sustained the martyrs in their sufferings, as we read in their authentic and contemporary acts. They were ordinary men and women, old and young, husbands and wives, boys and girls. Yet because they knew that Christ possessed their lives they went joyfully to torture and death,

rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer with him and for his sake. What they had pledged themselves to, we also have promised in our baptism. We have renounced the devil and all his works and all his pomps and in doing so we have pledged a complete and wholehearted obedience to Christ. We have undertaken to die to sin that we may live by and in him. So in return for our obedience, loyalty and love, Christ by his power will reign and rule in our hearts, giving us here and now the life which will bring us one day to life eternal.

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We announce with some regret that as from next January the annual subscription to THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT will be raised to 25s. post free, single copies 2/- each. As subscriptions become renewable they will be booked at the new rate. This has been made an absolute necessity by the steady increase, over the past two years, of the cost of printing and production.

We announce also that the general theme of the January number will be *Christian Unity*.



## ST JOHN THE BAPTIST

IVO THOMAS, O.P.

**I**N Advent we go back to the very beginning of the Gospel, to St John the Baptist and his message. He has been called the school-master of the Apostles, and later apostles and preachers ought to study no less intently in his school. First, because he was the fore-runner of our blessed Lord, come to make his path straight and smooth before him. He was the remover of obstacles in that path, that would be in the way when the Lord came. This is not the highest power, but a very necessary one. His work was not so much that of a sacrament, which confers grace, as of a sacramental. The preaching and teaching, the rites and ceremonies of religious life with its special clothes and organization, is of the same kind. All that has the power of disposing men to come to our Lord; it stands as a witness to his truth and goodness. Like St John who was a burning and a shining light, modern apostles too must be *vera lumina*,



satellites reflecting the rays of our Lord who is the *lux mundi*.

More particularly, St John the Baptist was the fore-runner because he taught penance. The light cannot reach souls so long as darkness is kept there. It shines indeed, but the darkness does not comprehend it. The first appeal must be to the conscience that it be cleansed from sin. Wills must be stirred to detest sin. They can only actually do this under the impulse of grace, for between sin and grace there is no halfway house or no man's land. At one and the same moment God gives charity and contrition, love of himself and hatred of sin, but he employs all ordinary means naturally suited to human activity, to prepare for this interior and supernatural work. Minds and wills are naturally moved by consideration and exhortation and example; these God uses to abase the hills of pride and fill up the valleys of despondency that would impede the path of his entry. As St Gregory says in his homily *Designavit*: 'The Lord follows his preachers: because preaching comes first, and when the words of exhortation run before and through them truth is received into the mind, then the Lord comes to our soul's dwelling. Therefore indeed it is that Isaias says to preachers: Prepare the way of the Lord; make straight the paths of our God.'

St John bore his witness both by his life and by his voice. His message of repentance is a hard one, but the people take to it; he has not treated them gently, calling them a viper's brood, but still he has stirred them to thoughts of something beyond this world, of a power that has no respect for their natural pretensions, of a judge who will deal with them finally, remorselessly, by absolute standards. 'Bring forth fruits worthy of penance, and do not begin to say "We have Abraham for our father." For I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children to Abraham. For now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that bringeth not forth good fruit, shall be cut down, and cast into the fire.' Ancestors, family, natural inheritance of qualities and talents are of no avail when one is in the presence of the supreme judge. The self-centred 'child of Abraham' is simply claiming to be what he is by nature, and if the conscience will not look beyond that, it is only assailable through those dictates of natural reason which are bound up with its very nature as reason. That certainly was the Baptist's approach. The common people, the publicans and

the soldiers, hearing his stern call to repentance came and asked him for more detailed guidance. 'What then shall *we* do?' He answered them perhaps more gently than the manner of his general proclamation may have led them to expect. That gaunt, ascetic figure, in its robe of hair, bearing the marks of fasting and rigorous self-discipline has succeeded in aweing them with his message. At the same time he had braced and stimulated their relaxed souls and they had dared to approach closer to him. He received them with gentleness, and speaks plainly and simply to them of elementary duties. 'He wanted', says St John Chrysostom, 'to lead them on to higher wisdom, but as they were not yet fitted for that, he unlocks lesser treasures, lest if he produced more valuable ones they might reach after them in vain and lose all.'

To the common people he speaks of the common compassion that should unite individuals of the same kind: 'He that hath two coats, let him give to him that hath none; and he that hath meat let him do in like manner.' The publicans, whose temptation was not so much the primary greeds for food and clothing as greed for money, he bids keep clear the distinction between what was theirs and what belonged to other people: 'Do (i.e. exact) nothing more than that which is appointed you.' The strength of the Roman soldier belonged of right to the imperial system of law which he was in the country to enforce. As a soldier he was an official, a servant of the law and the public good. John tells them not to use their strength for their private ends: 'Do violence to no man'; not to misuse their official position: 'neither calumniate any man' (i.e. lay no false accusation); and not to plunder the people among whom they are stationed: 'Be content with your pay'. Those who take such advice will not have done very much; these are common, elementary principles of natural reason. 'He unlocks', says Chrysostom, 'the lesser treasures.'

It is understandable that all those people should flock to hear St John the Baptist and ask his counsel, for he was a doctor who evidently used his own medicine and thrived on it. A man of great innocence, he none the less, but rather the more, practised an extreme of asceticism and self-denial. He accustomed himself to live in that solitude in which alone great energies and the loftiest thoughts are matured, with the simplest and roughest of clothing, the scantiest diet, apart from the traffic of men, dependent on the least bounties of nature for his needs. Naturally his



appearance and manner, born of such a life, and wholly in conformity with his message, added tremendous authority to what he said. Detestation of sin and some degree of mortification are absolutely necessary ingredients in any life that is to be directed towards God. They are incumbent with an extra and special urgency on those whose mission it is to preach these necessities to others. In their case too, their lives, like the Baptist's, must preach as much as their words.

### BALLADE OF ST JOHN THE BAPTIST

The desert soon shall, as the lily, flower; *Is. 35, 1*  
 Leopard with kid and wolf with lamb shall lie; *Is. 11, 6*  
 A little child shall hold them in his power  
 And fearless the serpent's hold espy; *Is. 11, 8*  
 The calf and bear each unto other nigh *Is. 11, 7*  
 Shall with their young feed in the self-same land,  
 But first from Jordan's banks there comes a cry:  
 'Do penance, for God's kingdom is at hand.' *Mt. 3, 2*  
 Can thorns bear grapes or thistles figs, before *cf. Mt. 7, 16*  
 The native rancour that is in them die?  
 Can we make ploughshares from the tools of war *Is. 2, 4; Mich. 4, 3*  
 Till passion stills, and foes with foes ally?  
 Ye children of the Hebrews, doubt not why  
 John comes in camel's hair to Jordan's strand,  
 But his example to yourselves apply,  
 Do penance, for God's kingdom is at hand.

Soldier and publican and Pharisee *Mt. 3*  
 On Jordan's brink for rites baptismal vie;  
 And in the desert all Judea would be, *Lc. 3*  
 Each one the Baptist's lore intent to try.  
 'Who from the wrath to come hath bid you fly,  
 You brood of vipers? Ere the chaff is fanned',  
 Thus to his questioners he makes reply,  
 'Do penance, for God's kingdom is at hand.'

### ENVOI

Prince, who of Israel art the Prince confessed,  
 And for an ensign of the folk dost stand, *Is. 11, 10*  
 May we, it being also thy behest, *Mt. 1, 15*  
 Do penance, for thy kingdom is at hand.

## HE THAT IS TO COME

MARK BROCKLEHURST, O.P.

*The Word was made Flesh and dwelt amongst us*

**N**OWHERE are we told more clearly and briefly of the manner of Christ's presence amongst us than in the introduction to St John's gospel. He is made Flesh; that is to say he is one who comes. In the first instance it is he who comes to us. Secondly he is the light that is the life of men, but a light that shines in darkness. Thirdly he must be awaited and received by us. And fourthly those who receive him find that they have the power to see the light shining in the darkness. 'And we saw his glory, the glory as it were of the only-begotten of the Father full of grace and truth.' (John 1. 14).

The Jews were remarkable in that they were looking to the future. Not for them only to rest content with the great favours that God had shown them in the past; the greatest favour was to come, in the person of the Prophet, the Messiah, the holy one of God. Through all those thousands of years, they had learned well the lesson of waiting. If they faltered, the chosen people of God never gave up expecting. Their long wait was finally rewarded. The Word was made Flesh. But that does not mean that the waiting is over. The long wait of the Jews is symbolic of the continued waiting of the Church. The first condition of Christ's presence within us is that we wait for him.

But it is necessary not only to wait, but to know whom we are waiting for. The Jews to whom our Lord spoke were for the most part like people looking up, waiting for the heavens to open and reveal the chosen one of God, glorious in power and majesty. But in effect, our Lord said to them: Do not look up: look down. The kingdom of heaven is like to a mustard seed, which is the least of all the seeds. The kingdom of heaven has already come and the violent take it by storm.

The Word who from the beginning was with God, and was God, the Word in whom all things are made, is a light that shines in darkness. The Jews were waiting for the Word, but they were waiting for one who would shine in brightness. Even the chosen



apostles came only slowly to a recognition of that. 'And after six days Jesus taketh with him Peter, James and John, and leadeth them up into a high mountain apart by themselves, and was transfigured before them. And his garments became shining and exceeding white as snow as no fuller on earth can make white.' They were struck with fear, but there seems to be a suggestion in St Peter's words at the transfiguration that they were witnessing the true manifestation of the Messias. Our Lord, however, gently taught them otherwise. 'And as they came down from the mountain, he charged them not to tell any man what they had seen till the Son of Man be risen from the dead . . . as it is written of the Son of Man, that he must suffer many things and be despised.' (Mark 9. 11).

Peter, James and John were to be together again, the chosen witnesses of a special event: 'And they came to a farm called Gethsemani. And he saith to his disciples, Sit you here while I pray. And he taketh Peter and James and John with him and he began to fear and to be heavy.' (Mark 14.32). At the transfiguration they were overcome with fear. Here at the agony in the garden they were overcome with sleep, but that would not prevent them from witnessing our Lord in the depths of his agony. They had seen the Word in glory, the light shining in brightness; now they were to see him in his agony, the light shining in darkness. It is not difficult to see the pattern of these events. The first was to strengthen them for the second, and to teach them the nature of the true manifestation of the Word, to teach them what to look for, to teach them where to look. The evangelists record that as he led them down from the mount of the transfiguration he was confronted with an epileptic, whom he cured. The world into which the Word comes is his own, but it is, characteristically, a world of epilepsy, above all a world of sin, and not a world of garments white as snow. His face shining bright and the garments white as snow, he taught them, were an anticipation, something he must merit by ascending another hill. And it was to be on that other hill that the Son of Man would be revealed in his fullness, where the light would shine most fiercely, but was indeed to be a light shining in the darkness of human weakness, misery and pain; there is finally the darkness of sin: 'In his body, on the tree, he bore our iniquities.'

If the apostles came only slowly to a knowledge of how to wait

for Christ, and where to look, we must not assume that we can do so quickly and with ease. 'There hath stood in the midst of you one whom you know not.' The solemn words of John the Baptist are valid for all time. Even when we want to see the Word, the itch to look for a light shining in brightness is deep within us. It is the itch to see our Lord transfigured, while all the time the kingdom is round about us. It is beneath us. It is the ground on which we walk. He, the Word, is creator of heaven and earth; that is to say of the old creation and of the new. But he is embedded in his creation like the mustard seed, and his manifestation is a slow and gentle process, following the pattern of the processes of this world. Slow and gentle because he is meek and humble of heart, but in his meekness and humility he is a willing victim of the violence of this world, of its pain and misery.

'Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For seeing that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of our preaching to save them that believe. For both the Jews require signs and the Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews indeed a stumbling block, and unto the Gentiles foolishness; but unto them that are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than men and the weakness of God is stronger than men' (1 Cor. 1.20). We want him to be manifest, bright and shining. We find in the Cross, which is the fullness of the Incarnation, either a piece of folly as did the Greeks, and we are moved to make of God a product of human cleverness and penetration, or we find it in some way a scandal, a stumbling block, because what we expect is a *sense* of the presence and of the light of God, or perhaps even some private revelation.

It was not God in the first place who wanted a language of pain and misery and death. That was our doing; it was we who made them a feature of living. But it is God who has turned graciously towards them. It is he who has entered into weakness and blessed death, while it is we who want to close our eyes to them.

Christ the Word of God is not overcome by weakness and death. . . . He triumphs through them. The Cross is the wisdom of God and the power of God. The dark world neither overcomes nor recognizes the light; he came unto his own and his own



received him not. But as many as received he gave them power to be made the sons of God, to them that believe in his name. Christ overcame the world by assuming its weakness; we obtain the power to do likewise by our faith in him.

‘There was a man sent from God whose name was John. He was not the light but was to give testimony of the light. That was the true light that enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world.’ It is remarkable that of the sixteen verses that form the introduction to St John’s gospel, the passage in which the evangelist gives in outline a complete picture of the Incarnation, five verses are devoted to John the Baptist. It is not difficult to see why. He is the symbol of how we must overcome the world by faith. He is not the light, but the witness to the light.

Human wisdom, the wisdom that the Greeks stand for, is the wisdom that finds its resources and power within itself. The light shines from within our own minds: *lumen intellectuale*. Good, and even holy as it is, it has never been sufficient to light up God, much less God-made-man. And it is not that it is a weak light that needs to be made stronger; a whole new technique of recognition must be learned, a new use of the mind. The man who sees, tells himself the story of truth; the believer listens to another telling the story of the ultimate mysteries that are not of this world: *Fides ex auditu*.

It is not the kind of knowledge that commends itself to the learned of this world. Belief is frequently identified with superstition: the Cross will always be folly to the Greeks. But unlike the wisdom of this world, this belief is of itself wholesome. It is saving. We can recognize the light shining in the darkness only in so far as we turn towards it. And we must turn our whole selves. A man can direct the native light of his mind, independently of the love, or hatred, in his heart. He can know the things that he hates. But the key to seeing the Word hidden in darkness is the initial desire to possess it, or rather to be possessed by it. ‘Peace on earth to men of good will’ was the message of the angels at the first Christmas. And it is good will that gives meaning to it. It is the good ground of the parable of the sower; that condition in ourselves which our Lord so clearly taught on that occasion as being the necessary condition in ourselves for the seed of the Word to take root.

In the gospels we see this faith in Christ slowly coming into

being. After a considerable period of patient and gentle teaching, he was by the lake with his disciples and he asked them, 'Whom do men say that I am?' And after they had given him an answer, he said, 'Whom do you say that I am?' And Simon Peter, answering for the rest, said, 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.' (Matt. 16. 16.) This was not only the faith of Peter that was being born; it was our faith, the faith of the Church. We believe by sharing in the faith of the Church. The Church is before all else a believing body.

St Peter was to answer for the apostles on a later occasion, when our Lord's strong words about his own flesh and blood being the necessary food and drink for eternal life had driven away most of his hearers. And turning to them he asked, 'Will you also go away?' And Peter answered, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.' The increasing strength of Peter's faith can be measured when we consider that, in his discourse, our Lord had given no hint of the sacramental character of the eating and drinking.

Later still, our Lord was sitting round the table with them, and taking bread, he blessed it and broke it and distributed it to them saying, 'This is my Body.' The story of the faith of Peter, that is to say, the story of the faith of the Church, is nearing its end. All through, it is the story of the good will of Peter; Peter turning towards the light.

John the Baptist is the symbol of this turning of the whole self. 'Repent', he said, 'for the Kingdom of God is at hand.' And these words were spoken in the desert. We must go out into the desert; that is to say, we must leave behind all the familiar places, the known ways, the tracks that human nature beats out for itself. It means, above all, turning our backs on ourselves; it is the beginning of that self-sacrifice which is the very essence of the following of Christ. This is the good will, this is the good ground, the necessary condition for recognizing the Word made Flesh. Like the Jews, we must wait; but unlike them we wait for the light to shine in the darkness.

The Advent of Christ. During these days the gospels of the Mass contain much about John the Baptist. His is the spirit of advent. It is the spirit of abandonment, of a turning the whole self, not out of any contempt for human nature, but out of a sense of its weakness. Repent for the Kingdom of God is at hand.



The two poles of Christ's presence within us are, on the one hand, the fullness of his redemptive power especially in his eucharistic sacrifice, and on the other the weakness of human nature.

Repent. In that classic act of contrition, the fiftieth psalm, David teaches us what repentance is. He is in the first instance concerned with his own immediate personal sin. 'Have mercy on me, O God, according to thy great mercy . . . wash me from my sin. Against thee only have I sinned.' He is concerned with himself, with his sin, and with God, who has been personally offended. But he passes to a wider view. 'Behold, I was conceived in iniquity, in sin did my mother conceive me.' Our own personal sins are nearest to us, but beyond that is the whole world of evil to which we belong, by nature. It has been overthrown by the establishment of the Kingdom, but we can only avail ourselves of that victory in the degree in which we turn towards the Kingdom. We can no longer rejoice in the innocence of Adam before the fall. He had a right to walk with pride in the presence of God. That has all been changed. The redemptive power of the Cross is not a power that makes strong human beings even stronger and more powerful. It works, not on our strength, but on our weakness. 'And lest the greatness of these revelations should exalt me, there was given me a sting of my flesh, an angel of Satan to buffet me. For which cause thrice I besought the Lord that it might depart from me; and he said to me; my grace is sufficient for thee, for power is made perfect in infirmity. Gladly therefore will I glory in my infirmities that the power of Christ may dwell in me. For which cause I please myself in my infirmities, in reproaches, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ. For when I am weak, then am I powerful.' All this is implied in John the Baptist's 'Repent'. It implies wanting the saving Truth, but it also implies, in the sense which St Paul explains, turning from ourselves.

For the Kingdom of God is at hand. It is present about us. It is hidden in little things. First the little thing that is the death on the cross. Just one of the many millions of deaths. And those who were responsible for it tried to make it even smaller. 'Let us get him out of the way before there is any more fuss', was the theme of those events. And there was nothing to give it any dignity. The good thief saw that; his death was an act of justice. And now the fullness of that redemptive sacrifice is hidden within

the elements of the bread and wine. And stemming out from that all the circumstances of our lives are shot through with the presence of Christ.

There has stood in the midst of you one whom you know not. But there are simple conditions for knowing him. 'And to them that received him, he gave power to be made the sons of God, to them that believe in his name, who are born, not of the will of flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.' The power does not come from our own nature, from our flesh, nor does it come from any other human being, but from God alone, from God made man. 'And of his fullness we have all received, grace for grace.'



## VOCATIONS AND THEIR RECOGNITION—II

COLUMBA RYAN, O.P.

IT has been seen in the previous article that there are three aspects under which we may approach the analysis of a vocation. Within the vocation itself there is the divine call and the ecclesiastical call. External to it, but as its necessary condition, there are the appropriate gifts and qualities in the recipient. We have seen that the divine call is a grace communicated to the soul. From the side of God we have seen that this grace is offered not as a matter of precept, but of counsel; to resist it, or rather to fail to receive it, is not necessarily sinful since its acceptance is left to our free, prudential choice; but this is not to say that it may not be sinful. For there are other sins than those of formal disobedience to a precept; there is the sin of rashness, against prudence. And failure to accept the grace offered may be just such a sin.

So far then, the grace has been considered as uncreated, in God; as that in him which we have called his *voluntas signi*, his 'will' signified to a man by some sign, in this case the counsels as they seem to a man to be bearing in upon his own life.

We have now to examine the grace as received in a man's soul, the created counterpart to God's favour. And the question already formulated in the previous article was how we may know its presence; how do we recognize a true vocation in this, its fundamental aspect?



The first thing to insist upon is that this grace like any other, being supernatural, beyond the reach that is of any natural capacity, is invisible, and strictly incomprehensible, an object of faith. 'It is strictly speaking impossible to be aware of it as such in the consciousness. It is the object of faith, like the real presence and the holy Trinity.'<sup>1</sup> The most that can be done is to detect it by signs of its presence, by the outward effects that it produces. Even here however there can be no certainty, for the signs may be, and often are, counterfeited—and this more usually unconsciously than consciously. Nor are the signs themselves such as can be exactly laid down, nor invariable. The way God deals with each infinitely discriminated personality, and the effects that his dealing produces in them, are not liable to classification or rule. One can only indicate 'classic' signs, and warn against their more usual counterfeits; but everything that follows must be modified by the prudent judgment of each case on its merits.

The signs I should choose to notice are: a conscious and felt attraction to religious or priestly life; an obscure drawing towards it, perhaps with a sense of duty attached, but without attraction; such a drawing, accompanied by positive repugnance for the life in question; a calculation, from the recognition a man may have of his whole providential setting, that he ought to follow such and such a life; the sense of the emptiness for him of any other life. Any one of these signs, or several together, or none of these but some others, may be the effects in a person of the grace of vocation. They serve as an indication, but not more; they are not a proof, and there can be no proof but in the venture itself and in its successful achievement (the proof of the pudding is in the eating). But equally any one of these signs, or all of them, may be present without the grace of vocation. Such are what I have called counterfeit signs. And experience shows that it is all too often when aspirants can be seen by other indications (the absence of the necessary qualities, or of an ecclesiastical calling) to have no vocation, that they claim to experience the most desperate and insistent attraction for religious or priestly life!

Not that such counterfeit signs are usually established by any conscious deceit in the person who manifests them. It is most often unconscious, and very often perhaps the result of faulty

<sup>1</sup> A. Bonduelle, O.P. *The Recognition of Vocation*, in the volume '*Vocation*' previously referred to, p. 45.

motives and mistaken ideas about vocation. It will be useful to call attention to some of these faulty motives. There may be an unwillingness to admit himself inferior to others, as if not to have a vocation must mean a lower degree of holiness. There may be an egocentric desire for self-perfecting, as if the primary aim of religious life were not simply God loved. There may be a false sense of duty, the fear that any other life must needs be somehow sinful, imperfect. There may be an exaggerated fear of losing his salvation. Less worthy motives may be the desire to attain the social standing that goes with the clerical life in this country; or a fear of the world's ways, some inferiority complex about facing life; or an admiration and hero-worship felt towards some religious or cleric, with the desire to imitate his way of life, or be in his company. Any one of these motives, or several together, may produce one or other of the signs already mentioned, and the modern psychologist could no doubt name others seated in the unconscious proper.

If we recognize these possibilities it will be seen to be prudent, in practice, for the detecting of true from counterfeit vocations, to take precautions against the interference of such motives. For these reasons, I should insist very strongly, in speaking to anyone who thought that he had a vocation, on the God-given character of any vocation, meaning by this positive assertion to eliminate any self-seeking, egocentricity, or disguised worldly motive. And then, to eliminate fear, it seems desirable to emphasize the perfect freedom of choice left by the offer of a vocation, and the fact that to reject it is not necessarily evil, not a rejection of God, even allowing for the danger of rashness. I should besides inculcate the single aim of a vocation, not the making perfect of self (which is the most widespread idea, and is an upside-down approach) but the perfect love of God; otherwise the boggy of a false 'duty' too easily haunts the conscience. To eliminate this still further, and to exorcise any spirit of legalism, I should dwell upon the personal character of the divine invitation, that it is an invitation to 'Follow me' delivered from a person to a person, invoking loyalty and generosity. And it is important always to make clear that though the vocation to religious life is to 'the perfect life', this is an abstract assessment and in no way means that the perfect life for any individual will be found there; his perfect life may be in marriage, and commerce.



All these are ways in which to correct tendencies from faulty motives; I would even go so far as to be chary of *suggesting* to any *individual* that he or she might have a vocation, unless I felt the strongest possible conviction of this and could find some reason for supposing he was hiding from it. To suggest, in other circumstances, is so easily to put a man-made idea, where the essential is God's call. This is not to rule out secondary causality in the making of a vocation; and there are many ways in which vocations may and ought to be brought to the minds of our Catholic people—sermons, exhibitions, perhaps advertisements. These are general means that may be used by the Holy Ghost as his instruments. The danger of the individual suggestion to the individual, except in the rare instance, is that one may too lightly take upon himself the instigation that is proper to God.

When all this had been said, however, we have to go on to notice that the presence, or the declaration, of these and other faulty motives is by no means an argument that should make one at once conclude that a given vocation is necessarily spurious. For there are, in this, two possibilities both quite compatible with the presence in a soul of the grace of vocation. In the first place, it must be remembered that God leads souls according to their actual state. He may very well, and often does, use our imperfect and even wrong motives to lead us through to the true thing. Thus not only may there be (how often does there fail to be?) a mixture of bad with good motives, but imperfect motives may contain the germ of the perfect motive. It is here that the Holy Father's reminder of the gradual unfolding of a vocation finds application to the divine call as it is received in the recipient. One might perhaps draw a parallel between such gradual development of a vocation in a soul and the gradual unfolding of God's revelation under the Old Covenant. Certainly, the divine vocation, like divine revelation, is, on God's side, perfect from the start. But its deployment in the soul, like the expression that God's revelation found in his people and in the prophets, is by stages; at first, perhaps, crude, according to the crude receptive capacity of the human medium in whom it finds realization outside God. Grace builds upon nature, and the first appearance of the building is in the rough shape of foundations. The importance of this is that those charged with the fostering or recognition of vocations should not be too exacting from the outset. It may

be sufficient, indeed it usually is sufficient, that an aspirant enter an order or a seminary with quite inadequate, and to some extent even erroneous, motives. Perhaps one classic example of this is St Theresa of Avila, whose first introduction to religious life was with not a little reluctance, and with little understanding of the true character of a Carmelite vocation. It would be difficult to deny, in the light of what came after, either that she had a true vocation or that she began it with anything but inadequate motives. With a religious, it is the novice master's task to see that he has a true motive by the time of his profession; he may remain very inadequate throughout his novitiate, and yet not be therefore suspected of having no vocation. Possibly the characteristic virtue demanded of novice masters and mistresses is patience.

In the second place, when one is confronted with the expression, by an aspirant, of faulty reasons for his vocation, there is always the possibility, not to say the probability, of a simple shyness or ignorance of how to express something that he does not fully understand. This will happen especially in the case of someone being obscurely drawn, he hardly knows how, by God's grace, to a way of life that he cannot express (the grace is indeed inexpressible). He feels, perhaps, that he must say something, and is led into giving as a reason for what he wants a wrong reason in spite of his fundamental rightness. The parallel here is between him and a mystic attempting to express, and finding no words in which to express, the ineffable dealing of God with his soul. The mystic easily, in the attempt, interprets; forced to confine himself to the tawdriness of his human language and experience, he may misinterpret. So, with the religious aspirant, particularly one untrained in religious self-expression, one should not take at its face value the reasons and motives he himself assigns to his pursuit of a vocation. He may do himself (and of course God) less than justice.

There are, of course, those who 'know the drill'. They will give exactly the right answers, and behave in exactly the right way expected of one in whom God's grace of vocation is present. The danger is that there is a class of persons who easily assimilate religious jargon. It would be as much a mistake to accept these as it would be to reject the former. They are not an uncommon phenomenon amongst the more pious aspirants to acceptance by

religious orders or seminaries. But they are fairly easy to see through.

It may seem from all this that there can be no signs of the presence in a soul of the grace of God's calling to religious or priestly life. Everything, it seems, may equally well be a sign of a vocation or of a pseudo-vocation. The answer is that there is in all this not a denial that there are signs, but only an insistence that it takes delicacy and prudence (engendered of a slow and hesitant experience) to recognize the probable presence of a vocation. It should at least set us on guard against rash assertion one way or the other. And, from the aspirant's point of view, it is fortunate that there is, besides the divine call in a vocation, the other element of ecclesiastical call. That, and the gifts and qualities that must be found in the recipient of a vocation, remain to be considered.

*(to be concluded)*



## THE BATTLE AGAINST PRESENT-DAY RESTLESSNESS\*

FRANZ HILLIG, S.J.

**N**OISE and haste brand our times. . . . No novel statement, this: we have all heard it in some form or other, and most people, at least in the Western world, surely agree. We are slaves—the very watch on our wrist a sign of servitude—we have ‘no time’, ‘no rest’; ‘Angina Temporis’ (as Dr Bramesfeld terms it) is a common disease. It is a fact that, even if a few free days do come our way, we are no longer capable of relaxing; restless activity holds us entirely in its power. Man, his nerves tense and his mind fuddled, finds no shelter of peace awaiting him when he is ejected nightly from office or factory; wearily he reaches home, only to plunge himself into so-called amusements. His money is taken from him and in return he becomes momentarily intoxicated with unhealthy, forced excitement, but there is neither peace nor lasting satisfaction in it.

\* Freely translated and adapted by Sister M. Nicolas, O.P., from the German: *Gegne die Unrast der Zeit*, in the March number of *Die Stimmen der Zeit*, Herder.



Everywhere we come up against sensation and exaggeration; the tempo of life tends to overpower us, it is all too big, too intense. . . . The individual faces giant concepts of technical, social and economic problems in helpless isolation, and is simply smothered.

For many thousand years the rhythm of breathing set the tempo of living: man followed the regular beat of the hooves of his helpmates the beasts of burden; the wind, caught in the sail, brought strength with it and power; today it seems as if human life is whirled along by an inhuman motor placed in the centre of all, capable of uncanny, incomprehensible speed. Man is but a tiny wheel in this huge machinery, swept along in unceasing turmoil, so that listening and watching become practically impossible, and body and spirit break under the strain. 'Man is a faulty construction', they explain, coldly amused; 'the species is unfit for the demands of the machine.' . . .

So much for the diagnosis. . . . But the question 'Can anything be done about it?' is more vitally important.

### *Utopian daydreaming provides no answer*

One thing is certain: there is no point in a protest against the machine-age. You cannot snatch the car or the 'plane away from man. Goosefeather quills and horse-cabs are things of the past; it is no use building an ideal on ruins. We cannot escape the development of things; we are travelling along the road at breakneck speed, but are more likely to break our necks by attempting to get out than by continuing the journey. No, let us not waste our energy, so much needed in the struggle against this present restlessness, by fighting for utopian goals. 'The balance of rest and movement can be gained only by crossing through dangerous zones.' (E. Jünger: *Sanduhrbuch*.) To protest actively against the developments of the times by, for instance, neglecting traffic regulations, merely endangers life and heightens the general perplexity. True liberty lies in the mastery of these things.

The problem is how to prevent the machine from killing the spirit and liberty, from enslaving human dignities; how can we stem the tide of unrest and master it? God never allows an evil beyond our strength to threaten us, we know: but we seek practical suggestions for the combat.

*Negative points: where we need not join in*

First of all a few negative points: We complain: 'Everybody seems to be in a rush!' Must we rush along with them then? I am not here to rush with others, but to rest with them. Why dash across the road between two cars instead of waiting for the change of traffic lights? The excuse is not merely that we have to be in time for this or that, it is rather this deep-seated spirit of unrest within us. We are not yet fully masters of ourselves, we must learn to govern more firmly.

Undoubtedly the battle against present-day restlessness must have its beginning in the small enclosure of our own heart. We must learn to be still . . . to give ourselves time. After all, the progress of the world does not depend upon us, the competition of production, the making and re-making of laws is not our personal concern; ours are the simpler duties of an ordinary citizen. Our home is the place where we have some say and authority, and it is here that we can build up a firm battle-front.

One day Sister Simplicia asked St Francis de Sales how he would go about things, were he a sister in the Convent. (She was so simple and unaffected, that she could ask such things with ease.) Smiling, the good Bishop gave his answer: 'I would try to close the doors quietly.' (Actually he said quite a bit more, but let this short quotation suffice for us here.) We cannot change the ways of the world, but we can close a door quietly. We can consider the folks upstairs or next-door when turning on the wireless. There is really no need to shout or to bang things about. One could extend the examination of modern consciences considerably in this direction.

Here is another point: we can stay at home. Some people rush from one engagement to the next; every film, concert, lecture, or musical must be attended, they just cannot stay away. Did not Pascal say that he discovered every human tragedy to have its roots in people's inability to stay quietly at home? Because their minds are empty they cannot endure their own company (Pascal's 'ennui'). He was by no means the first to speak in this strain; St Benedict has a sharp rebuke for restless monks in his Rule, and Thomas à-Kempis also warns monks to stay in their cells, where they will find that which is lost outside. (*Imit.* I, 20.)

Inward peace, a good conscience, and ability to 'be still' are

most important then; here is another point to be considered: that of freedom, liberty. An example: it seems that man cannot do without a newspaper, one at the very least. Very well, we will also take one, we do not wish to be singular. But it depends entirely on ourselves as to how much time we spend on reading it. Our power of free choice must be trained to discern what may be of cultural and spiritual worth in our reading-matter. Much time can be gained by merely scanning the morning paper and only reading one or two articles fully.

It is the same with the radio, books, invitations. . . . 'Have you read the latest Graham Greene, Bruce Marshall's most recent, this one of Hemingway's?' Such questions have their root in restlessness, increase the rush of life, and foster a servile spirit. It takes some doing to become free in these matters, to refuse with thanks, with a laugh. . . . Apart from professional demands, our reading should be measured by the needs of our inner life. We must guard this life, the life of Christ within us, the love of God, and our very prayer, from what Pius XII called 'the heresy of action'. Let us not overestimate performance and speed: the kingdom of God lies in stillness and peace, and in these only the seed secretly takes root and grows. . . .

It depends on ourselves how much we are swept along by forceful ambition, endlessly aspiring to better jobs and higher wages. For many, satisfaction in the following of their vocation is a source of happiness, but often the restlessness of modern industrialism interferes and gives rise to grave consequences. In its train follow unhealthy desires for wealth, material good living, success and esteem. Doctors attribute to these distorted values the cause of much sickness. 'These desires with their faulty perception of "important" and "valuable" signify the mass-neurosis of modern man, who hardly recognizes any scale of values, save that of material goods. Riches alone never bring joy; on the contrary. . . .' (Dr K. Gauger.)

### *Positive possibilities*

To liberate oneself, to stand out from prevalent attitudes, to refrain from hurrying and rushing along with the crowd, are all negative measures. They leave a void which must be filled. We must foster within ourselves the growth of peace, of independence and spiritual riches, of which, by God's grace, we already possess



in larger measure perhaps than our pessimism leads us to believe.

We can introduce order into our lives. During the Ordination ceremony the Bishop bids Exorcists become 'spirituales imperatores'; so also must we, by our very vocation as Christians, become rulers of our own spirit.

Much wisdom can be discovered in the simple old sayings, rules of order: 'One thing at a time', and 'First things first'! They assume a new and weightier meaning these days. Order rescues the spirit from being driven along; it secures space and freedom for reflection. It can produce wonders in the midst of a full working day. An old school-master, forty-three years in the profession, never once felt that his strength had been overtaxed: 'I have always distributed the work, allotted everything.' This distribution is most important; surely it is overestimation of self to think that, for example, as foreman, the entire job in hand falls on oneself. A good leader must be able to delegate work, to distinguish between the important and the less important. He must educate others to become qualified helpers.

A person who rushes about, busy with many things, is not necessarily the most hard-working; as an Italian business-man once remarked: 'I never saw a really busy man move quickly.'

Haste is a bad councillor; it not only hinders the full fruition of one's work, but it also harms the soul. As an old German proverb has it: 'God gave us time; he never mentioned haste.' And the Arabs are even more forthright: 'Haste is a gift of the devil; God gave us stillness and rest.' It would be profitable to include the question of stillness and rest when we examine our consciences; it might reveal to us the cause of much distress and failure.

It seems to be rather forgotten, these days, that an important aspect of 'order' lies in an orderly division of one's time. With forethought and firmness it is possible to give the night its due of sleep. The Sunday, too, as seventh-day rest, assumes a new importance, especially for the 'overworked'. The number of those who will not give up their Sunday is on the increase. The rhythm of night and day, of work and relaxation, weekday and Sunday, the idea of 'feast-day' or 'holiday', are all important factors in the struggle against unrest, and some of us need to learn all over again to understand these things.

It is not only the individual as such who is affected; the problem

leads further into society as a whole. Family life in particular is seriously threatened with destruction in this scientific age of ours. If saved, fostered and strengthened, this family-life is a powerful antidote against all the prevalent rush and haste. 'A man who can no longer spare the time to take his children for a walk, or to listen to their chatter, will also find that he is no longer able to pray.' (Fr Hirschmann.)

To eat and drink in a leisurely way is in harmony with order in nature. How many rush through their meals, treating them as burdensome business to be got through as hastily as possible! The family gathered round the table, so psychologists assure us, is a most important aspect of social life. In fact anything which will foster personal contact is important in this impersonal, cold machine-age. A little word, a letter, an informal meeting, all these can mean so much. . . .

By his very presence, a good man, however insignificant he may seem in the eye of the public, becomes a blessing to his family and his friends. Someone who will listen to our troubles, give advice or console us, can do more for us than any machine. No mechanical construction will ever replace home, family or friends. On the contrary; the man who has the peaceful security of a home waiting for him when he leaves the noise and turmoil of his job, can hold his own better than others less fortunate in this respect. With wife and children ready to welcome him, he can relax in familiar surroundings, and enjoy a quiet hour or two, perhaps with a book. What a stand-by a book can be in the tumult of life! If it is the kind of book which nourishes the spirit, it will be a most powerful ally, provided we use it aright. Even here desire for sensation and distraction can mar the good effect. It is important to steep oneself in the spirit of the book. A weary man does well to read slowly, to read over again some striking passage, to reflect a little here and there, closing the book awhile. . . . It is not a question of how much you read, but rather of how much you gain by reading. Thoughtful reading constitutes an experience; it opens the door to meditation.

The radio is often blamed for the noise around us. Here too the fault lies at man's door for putting an invention, in itself a good thing, to unprofitable use, to the detriment of all. One must learn to listen thoughtfully and judiciously; wonderful concerts are brought to listeners who would never be able to go out to

hear them; refreshment and strength will be gained by purposeful listening.

It is the same with pictures: we are more and more subjected to 'visual aids'. Again let us select. So many look but fail to see. Few films are really worth seeing. We might benefit more by staying at home and picking up a book of Old Masters, for example, and looking in peace and quiet at pictures, paintings which have something to give us, which enrich the mind in peace. Claudel maintained that Dutch interiors have such powerful influence and impress people, because these pictures have a centre, a soul. What a difference, he said, from some modern paintings, which make you feel that, were they not held together by a frame, they would explode, and fizzle away like effervescing lemonade. He is far from condemning all modern art, however. The point is this: he who seeks inward peace must choose pictures which radiate such peace.

Generally speaking, does our generation ever take time and trouble to think? A German business-man, travelling in India, was deeply impressed when an Indian colleague refused an invitation to some function with the words: 'Thank you, but I cannot afford the time; I really must give myself time tonight to do some thinking.' Where in our Western world is the man who would give such an explanation for 'having no time'? With us it generally means, surely, that we have time, plenty of it in fact, for an accumulation of all sorts of unnecessary and superfluous things. There is too much doing and talking and not enough thinking.

It is sad to see how much we Christians have forgotten the heritage of stillness which is ours by right; so much so that we have come to regard it as typical of Eastern wisdom, alien to us. Thinking, growing in knowledge of God and self, silence and meditation, are all an integral part of the ancient, hallowed traditions of Christianity. They did not pass with the middle ages, but continue the same in our day, as much the heritage of busy lay-people deep in the activity of life as of those who live in the somewhat less hectic atmosphere of the cloister. Let us not find excuses in superficiality and 'busy-ness'.

Someone said once: 'A man who prays is connecting his village with Heaven.' There is abundant cause for hope while we have men living among us who have the strength, by God's grace, to



withstand the hectic rush of life by giving time to silent recollection, to meditation . . . spending some time daily in 'the ante-chamber of Heaven'. They bring healing for the world's restlessness in the peace which comes to them from God, which is God. This explains the need, deeply felt by many modern lay-folk, to draw apart from time to time in 'retreat'. Thus only can they find themselves, in the stillness and peace which alone has the power to heal wounds caused by the restlessness of modern living.



## THE MARTYRS OF LYONS, A.D. 177

EDMUND HILL, O.P.

**W**E have a first-hand account of the sufferings of these martyrs in a letter which the Christians of Lyons, in the south of France, wrote to the churches of Asia Minor, with whom they had historical connections. The letter was quoted at length by the Church historian Eusebius in the fourth century, and a translation of it as he gives it is here presented. The reader will notice that the word 'confession' occurs very often. It is always used in the sense of a confession of faith, and never in the sense of a confession of sins. Besides describing the gruesome torments which the martyrs endured, the writer constantly refers to them in terms from the athletic world. One such phrase which he uses has become a commonplace of Christian language, the phrase 'a martyr's crown'. Nowadays we think of a crown as a king's head-dress, made of gold and precious stones. But to the writer of this letter a crown meant a wreath of bay leaves with which the winner of athletic competitions was crowned. So I have translated the word as 'garland', since 'wreath' has for us rather funereal associations. The flowery and high-flown way in which the martyrs' ordeal is described, though it does not always appeal to modern taste, has this value that it gives us an inkling of how the early Christians regarded, ideally at least, these grisly crises which were always liable to fall upon them. What in themselves were just episodes of disgusting brutality, were seen as chances of competing in God's honour, of showing one's mettle, and of worsting the devil and his satellites in a strenuous wrestling or boxing match. The eyes of faith could even see them as festive wedding processions. The imagination is the weakest point in a man's armour when he is faced with such horrors, and perhaps this way of thinking about

*the persecutions in symbolic metaphorical terms was a technique the Christians found effective, under God's grace, in steeling their imaginations to face the ordeal without breaking.*

*The letter.* The servants of Christ who live at Vienne and Lyons in Gaul to our brothers down in Asia and Phrygia, who have the same faith and hope of redemption as we have; peace and grace and glory to you from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

It is quite beyond the power of words to describe the intensity of our afflictions here, the fury of the pagans against the saints, the things which the blessed martyrs had to endure. The Adversary fell upon us with all his might, first giving us a foretaste of what his arrival in full force would be like, and providing his minions with practice against God's servants to get them used to the business. But the grace of God was in action against them, rescuing the weak from their hands, and setting firm standing pillars up against them, men of sufficient endurance to draw all the violence of the Evil One onto themselves; they even grappled with him hand to hand, putting up with every sort of abuse and ill-treatment. In their hurry to reach Christ they made light of enormous trials; they really showed how true it is that the sufferings of the present time are just not to be compared with the glory that is going to be revealed to us.

*Arrest.* The first thing they were to endure most nobly was being set upon by the city mob in a heap, howling, looting, throwing stones, pulling and knocking them about, doing everything in fact that the most savage rabble likes to see done to its enemies. Next they were brought into court by the chief of police and the justices and questioned in the presence of the people, and on confessing themselves Christians they were put in gaol until the arrival of the governor. When they were eventually brought before him, he started giving vent to the most ferocious sentiments against us. This was altogether too much for one of the brethren called Vettius Epagathus,<sup>1</sup> who was brim full of the love of God and his neighbour. He was only a young man, but had so ordered his life that he deserved the testimonial of an old man like Zachary, 'walking in all the commandments and justifications of the Lord without blame' (Luke 1, 6), tireless

1 Who was not one of those so far arrested.

in the service of his neighbour, full of zeal for God, and alive with the Holy Ghost. Being the man he was, then, he could not stomach such a display of irrational prejudice against us. He grew more and more angry, until at last he spoke up and demanded the right to be heard in defence of the brethren, and said he would show that there is nothing godless or impious about us. But the people round the platform shouted him down (he was a leading citizen<sup>1</sup>) and the governor would not allow his very fair request, but merely asked him if he was a Christian too. When he confessed in ringing tones that he was, he was taken off to share the martyrs' lot. They nicknamed him the Christian's advocate, but really it was the Advocate in him, the Holy Ghost, filling him even more than Zachary. The fullness of his charity showed this quite clearly, and his readiness to lay down his life in defence of the brethren. He was, and is, a true-born disciple of Christ, following the Lamb wherever he goes. (Apoc. 14, 4.)

*Interrogation.* Then the rest were put to the test and sifted out, and the first martyrs came forward, ready, even eager, to go through with the confession of martyrdom. It also became clear who were not ready, and not in good training, too weak to bear the strain of a great match. About ten of them fell out of the running. Besides causing us immense distress, this dampened the ardour of the others who had not yet been arrested, and who in spite of their heavy trials stuck to the martyrs throughout, and never forsook them. So we were a prey to great anxieties because of the uncertainty of the issue; not so much that we were afraid of the torments in store for us, but we could not help wondering how our confession would go, or being afraid that somebody might fall away. However, every day those worthy of it were being arrested, to make up for the number of the lapsed, until all the most outstanding members of our two churches, to whom our communities here owe everything, had been rounded up. And since the governor had ordered us all to be publicly examined, they also arrested some of our people's pagan slaves.<sup>2</sup> This was a cunning move of Satan's, because the slaves were so afraid of the tortures they saw the saints enduring, that the police easily goaded them to tell whatever lies they wanted to

1 He was probably a barrister, who would be standing near the tribunal among his colleagues.

2 It was in accordance with Roman law to arrest the slaves of accused persons, and examine them under torture to extract evidence against their masters.



hear. Thus they falsely accused us of cannibal feasts and incestuous intercourse, and of anything else that is too unholy even to mention or think of, indeed of things that one dares not believe have ever been committed by men. When these stories got around, they made everyone wild with rage against us, even people whose familiarity with us had previously inclined them to moderation. So our Lord's words came true, 'The time will come when everyone who kills you will think he is offering worship to God' (John 16, 2). Thereupon the holy martyrs were subjected to indescribable tortures, because Satan was particularly anxious to get them to corroborate these blasphemous calumnies.

Mob, governor, and police turned the whole weight of their fury on Sanctus, a deacon from Vienne; on Maturus, who though only recently baptized turned out to be a staunch champion; on Attalus, a man from Pergamum by origin, who has always been a pillar and a buttress of our communities here; on Blandina, in whom Christ showed that God accords honour and glory to what men consider cheap and insignificant and worthless,<sup>1</sup> if he sees charity there, charity which shows itself in power, and not in boastful appearances. The rest of us were all terrified, and Blandina's earthly mistress, who was herself one of the competing martyrs, was wracked with anxiety that bodily weakness would rob her of the courage to confess her faith. But Blandina was filled with such power, that even the men taking it in turns to torture her from morning till night were utterly exhausted, and had to confess that she defeated them, and that there was nothing more they could do to her. They were astonished that there should still be any life left in her, when her whole body was so broken and torn, and they declared that the rack by itself was enough to have killed her, let alone all the other tortures. But the blessed woman, like the stout-hearted athlete she was, took on a new lease of life by her confession, and seemed to find refreshing comfort and relief from her torments in saying 'I am a Christian, and there is nothing criminal committed amongst us'.

Sanctus too in a superhuman fashion nobly bore every outrage men could inflict. The wicked were hoping to get something nasty out of him by the unceasing pressure of their tortures, but he withstood them with such unshakeable firmness that he did not even disclose his name or nationality or home town or whether

1 She was a slave.

he was slave or free, but only answered all their questions in Latin with the words: 'I am a Christian'. Again and again it had to stand for name, nationality, home town, and everything else, and nothing more could the pagans get from him. This made the governor and the torturers all the more truculent, and when there was nothing else they could do to him, they applied red-hot plates of brass to the most tender parts of his body. Though these were indeed burnt away, he himself remained inflexible and unyielding, solid in his confession, sprinkled and strengthened by the heavenly water of the fountain of life which springs from the belly of Christ. (cf Ps. 35, 10, John 7, 38). His body was evidence of what he suffered, being just a mass of weals and wounds, and so twisted up that he no longer even looked human. But Christ was suffering in him and achieving great and glorious deeds, bringing the Adversary to nothing and showing the rest of us that where the Father's love is, there is nothing to be afraid of, and no pain where Christ's glory is present. Because after a few days the wicked put the martyr on the rack again, with the idea that they would get the better of him if they applied the same tortures, when his wounds were so swollen and inflamed that he could not even bear the touch of a hand; or that at least he would die under torture, and so strike fear into the rest of us. But in fact what happened was that, against all human expectations, his body revived and straightened up under these subsequent tortures, and he regained his original appearance and the use of his limbs; in a word, by the grace of Christ his second time on the rack turned out to be a cure instead of a torment.

Then there was a woman called Biblias, one of those who had denied the faith. The Devil reckoned therefore that he had already swallowed her, but he wanted to make sure of her by getting her to tell blasphemous and ungodly tales about us. So he fetched her up to be tortured, as being a cowardly creature whose spirit was already broken. But as a matter of fact she came to her senses when put on the rack, almost as if she had just woken from up a deep sleep. The transitory pains, I suppose, reminded her of the everlasting punishment of hell. So she contradicted their malicious calumnies, and said, 'How could such people eat children, seeing that they do not even allow themselves to eat the blood of dumb animals?' And from that moment she began to confess that she was a Christian, and so was added to the company of the martyrs.

In this way Christ checkmated the tyrants' tortures through the patience of the blessed martyrs, and the Devil had to think up other devices. These consisted of shutting them up in the gaol's foulest dungeon in the dark, and stretching their legs apart in the stocks to the fifth hole,<sup>1</sup> and treating them generally in the brutal manner which gaolers possessed by the Devil are in the habit of using on prisoners they have a grudge against. As a result most of them died off in gaol—as many, that is, as the Lord had intended this sort of release for, to manifest his glory. Some, you see, though so savagely tortured it seemed no medical aid could keep them alive, did keep going none the less in gaol. They lacked all human care, but were strengthened body and soul with new vigour by the Lord, and themselves encouraged and cheered on the rest. Others, late arrivals only recently arrested, whose bodies had endured no ill-treatment, succumbed beneath their close confinement, and died in prison.

Among them was the blessed Pothinus, who had been entrusted with the office of bishop of Lyons, a very frail old man over 90. He was afflicted with an infirmity which made breathing difficult, but his spirit<sup>2</sup> took on new strength at the prospect of martyrdom. He too was dragged before the judgment seat, almost dead with old age and sickness and only kept alive, it seems, so that Christ could triumph in him. The police brought him into court accompanied by the city magistrates, and the crowd yelled and screamed at him as if he were Christ himself, and he bore fine witness to the faith. When the governor asked him who was the God of the Christians, he answered, 'You would know if you were fit to'. At that he was mercilessly pulled about and beaten; the people nearest kicked and punched him in any way they could, and those further away threw at him whatever they could lay hands on. Everyone seemed to think that they would be committing some great sin or sacrilege if they did not have a share in his ill-treatment; they imagined that this was the right way to vindicate the honour of their gods. Finally he was thrown in gaol scarcely able to breathe, and died two days later.

And then God disposed things in a wonderful way, and Jesus revealed his boundless mercy in a fashion that is rarely seen in our

<sup>1</sup> The stocks, it seems, would be a board with a row of holes in it, and a prisoner's feet would normally be secured in two adjoining holes; but to cause the maximum discomfort one leg would be put in the fifth hole from the other.

<sup>2</sup> The writer is contrasting 'breath' and 'spirit', Pothinus' physical and spiritual breathing.



brotherhood, but which is not for all that beyond the art and skill of Christ.<sup>1</sup> The thing was that those who had denied the faith when the first arrests were made, were locked up all the same with the rest, and shared their ordeal. So their betrayal did not do them any good even in this life. The ones who had confessed what they were, were locked up simply as Christians, without any other charge being made against them; but these others were held in custody as murderers and defilers, and received a double punishment. For while the trials of the rest were lightened by the joy of martyrdom, and the hope of the promises, and their love for Christ, and the Father's Spirit; these people were grievously vexed by their consciences, and when paraded in public they could even be distinguished from the rest by the very look on their faces. The others would come forth cheerfully, glory and great grace shining in their looks; and they wore their chains as splendid ornaments, like a bride decked out with a variety of golden tassels; they were perfumed so with the good odour of Christ, that some even thought they were anointed with scents and spices. But these were downcast and subdued and gloomy, robbed of all self-respect, scorned even by the pagans as paltry cowards; they were burdened with the accusation of murder, and had lost the glorious and honourable and life-giving title of Christian. When the rest observed this it steadied them wonderfully, and the moment they were arrested they would unhesitatingly confess, scarcely even noticing any of the Devil's suggestions.

*Executions.* After this it came to the final martyrdoms, a different sort for each. In this way they made an offering to the Father of one garland, fashioned from various coloured flowers. It was only right for these staunch athletes to earn the garland of immortality by contending in a variety of contests, and coming through victorious. So Maturus and Sanctus and Blandina and Attalus were led out to the wild beasts in the arena, for the pagans to make a public spectacle of their inhuman barbarity—a special show had been arranged for our benefit. Maturus and Sanctus again ran through the whole gamut of their torments in the amphitheatre, as if they had had nothing at all to suffer until now. Or rather like wrestlers who have beaten their oppo-

<sup>1</sup> God's mercy does not consist merely in the discomfiture of the lapsed, as the writer seems at first to be saying; but in their restoration to grace which he describes much further on.

nents in bout after bout, until they come to compete for the prize in the finals, they ran the customary gauntlet of whips, they were mauled by the beasts, they endured every cruelty the blood-crazed people could think of to shout for, and to cape everything they were put on the iron chair to be roasted till the mob was sated with the reek of it. Not that even this could allay their thirst for blood; they became still more savage in their determination to break the martyrs' endurance. Even so they got nothing more out of Sanctus except the confession which he had been repeating from the very beginning. Finally after coming alive through their stupendous ordeal, they had their throats cut.

Blandina was hung up on a stake and left as fodder for the wild beasts which were then let in. She hung there in the form of a cross and never stopped praying. Thus she gave great encouragement to the others in their ordeal, since their Lord, who was crucified for them, in order to assure those who believe in him that every one who suffered for Christ's glory will enjoy the company of the living God, was in this way made visible to their very eyes in the person of their sister. When none of the wild beasts even so much as touched her, she was taken down from the stake and fetched back to prison, to be kept for another contest. So she was to come to victory through many trials, and inflict upon the crooked serpent the irrevocable sentence of defeat. She was to outstrip all the brethren, this weak, little insignificant woman who had put on Christ the great invincible athlete, and after beating the Adversary in many bouts she was to win through to the garland of incorruption. (cf. I Cor. 9, 25.)

Attalus too was loudly clamoured for by the crowd, since he was a well known figure. He came forth as a competitor well prepared in his conscience, a man soundly and genuinely trained in Christian discipline, who had always stood out among us as a witness and a martyr to the truth. He was led round the amphitheatre with a placard carried in front of him, on which was written in Latin 'This is Attalus the Christian'. The people were thoroughly roused against him, but when the governor learnt he was a Roman citizen, he had him taken back to the others in prison. Then he wrote to Caesar about them, and adjourned their case until he received his answer. The consequent delay was turned to the best advantage, for through the patience of these martyrs Christ revealed his boundless mercy. By means of the living he

brought the dead back to life, and made the martyrs a present of those who had shrunk from martyrdom. It was an occasion of immense joy to the virgin mother,<sup>1</sup> who thus received back the children she had, so to say, miscarried of. Thanks to these martyrs most of those who had denied the faith returned to her womb, and were conceived again and restored to life, and learnt to confess. Alive once more and stiffened with a new resolve, knowing the sweetness of God who does not desire the death of the sinner and receives repentance with mercy, (Ezech 18, 32) they came before the judgment seat to be questioned again by the governor. Caesar, you see, had replied that all who denied the faith were to be released, and the rest done to death. So on the occasion of our local fair, when people flock into town, the governor paraded the blessed martyrs before his tribunal for the benefit of the crowds. Next he questioned them again, and the Roman citizens he beheaded, the rest he condemned to the beasts. Then was Christ wonderfully glorified in those who had previously denied him, but now, to the astonishment of the pagans, confessed. They were in fact questioned separately in private, the intention being to release them forthwith. But when they confessed, they were added to the company of the martyrs. Only those fell out who never had a real trace of faith anyway, or genuine appreciation of the bridal garment, or any notion of the fear of God, whose manner of life had brought the Way<sup>2</sup> into ill-repute; (cf. John 17, 12), in fact the sons of destruction. (cf. I John 2, 19.) The rest were all restored to the Church.

Now there was a Phrygian doctor called Alexander who had spent many years in Gaul, and was known to practically everyone for his love of God and his boldness in speaking the word (he was not lacking in apostolic grace).<sup>3</sup> He was standing in court while these people were being examined, and by nodding and signalling he was egging them on to confess; he was so keyed up in fact, he seemed to the bystanders like a woman in childbirth. Well, the crowd was very annoyed to see those who had previously denied the faith now confessing, and they started shouting at Alexander as the cause of it. When the governor realised what was happening, he

<sup>1</sup> The Church.

<sup>2</sup> The Christian religion. cf. Acts 9, 2.

<sup>3</sup> This may mean either that he was an officially ordained 'apostle' (cf. Eph. 3, 11), i.e. a priest ordained for missionary preaching; or that he enjoyed the special charism of the 'word of wisdom' (I Cor. 12, 8).



asked him who he was and flew into a temper when he said he was a Christian, and condemned him on the spot to the beasts. So the next day he went into the arena with Attalus, whom the governor had again sent to the beasts, in spite of his being a Roman citizen, to please the crowd. They were put through all the amphitheatre's facilities for torture, and were finally slaughtered after enduring a stupendous ordeal. Alexander never so much as groaned or grunted, being too busy talking to God in his heart. As for Attalus, when he was placed on the iron chair and roasted, he called out to the crowd in Latin amid the reek of his scorching flesh, 'This really is behaving like cannibals, what *you* are doing. But we never eat men or do anything else that is wicked.' When they asked him what God's name was, he answered, 'God hasn't got a name like a man'.

Finally on the last day of the games Blandina was brought out again, together with Ponticus, a boy of fifteen. They had been brought along every day to see the others suffer, and every way was tried of forcing them to swear by their idols. But they remained steadfast and disregarded them, and the mob grew so wild with them that they had no pity for the boy's age, or respect for the woman's sex. They subjected them to every form of horror, took them round from torture to torture, trying again and again to make them swear, but without any success. For Ponticus died under their hands after staunchly enduring every ordeal, greatly helped, as even the pagans were aware, by the tireless encouragement of his sister.<sup>1</sup> As for Blandina herself, she was the last of all to die, like a noble mother urging on her children and presenting them to the King for their prizes, after taking the measure of their efforts herself; and then she hurried after them in the procession, as if she had been invited to a wedding banquet instead of being thrown to the beasts. After being whipped and mauled and roasted, she was finally tied in a net and thrown to a bull. She was tossed by the animal several times, though such was the intensity of the hope she derived from her faith, and the intimacy of her conversation with Christ, that she felt nothing. At last she too was slaughtered, and even the pagans confessed that they had never seen a woman endure so much.

<sup>1</sup> We cannot assume that they were natural brother and sister. It is more likely the writer simply means 'his sister in the faith'. In the next sentence he clearly has the mother of Macchabees in mind (II Macc.).

*Aftermath.* Yet still their savage frenzy against the saints was not satisfied; wild and barbarous people stirred up by the wild beast<sup>1</sup> take a long time to calm down. . . .

And so they refused to let the Christians bury the martyrs' remains, and after throwing them to the dogs, and letting them lie unburied in the open, with a police guard to prevent the Christians taking them away, they burnt them and scattered the ashes in the Rhone.<sup>2</sup> They did this as if they could defeat God and deprive them of the resurrection. 'Now let us see', they said, 'if they will rise again, or if their God can help them and deliver them from our hands.'



## COMMENT

### A BOOK OF HOURS

IF I may be allowed to add a postscript to a postscript I should like to draw the attention of readers of the article *The Embracing Prayer* in the September number of *THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT* to the appearance of an English version of a vernacular *Book of Hours* produced by the Benedictines of the abbey of Encalat in the South of France. This work, which was undertaken in the first place for congregations of Sisters who were not obliged to the recitation of the breviary, deserves to be widely known among those who are similarly at liberty to choose their daily method of prayer and who feel a legitimate desire to enter more fully into the spirit of the liturgical cycle. *The Book of Hours* is not a translation of the breviary but a shorter and simpler volume constructed on the Church's plan for the daily offices and furnished with a lectionary and a short martyrology. For many people, the lectionary alone will amply justify the immense care that has gone into its making. Even those who have little leisure or who lack the confidence to master the elementary rules for the recitation of the hours could easily and profitably follow the scheme of daily readings from the Old and New Testaments with their accompanying selection of patristic sermons and commentaries. The words of Ambrose, Chrysostom, Augustine, Leo, Gregory, Bernard have a directness,

<sup>1</sup> The Devil.

<sup>2</sup> This sentence is just a summary of quite a long section.

universality and authority which derives from their unique gifts for the instruction of the faithful, and are immeasurably richer and finer than any modern expositions of comparable length could possibly be. The hours themselves are given in both Latin and English, the psalter which forms their stable substance being in the new Latin version. An attractive feature of the way this is set out is the allusion to a New Testament text which is printed at the head of each psalm. Here too are the ancient seasonal hymns and prayers, first fruits of the Church's meditation upon the mysteries of faith, the outpourings of her thanks, praise and petition at all times and in all places. Those who have no experience or instruction in the recitation of the hours will surely without difficulty find a confessor or retreat master prepared to give them the few minutes explanation which they need to help them use the book properly, while those who are merely looking for the best possible book of meditations could not do better than buy this. The two volume edition costs 4,000 francs (approximately £4), the single volume edition 3,700 francs, and may be obtained direct from Editions D'Encalcat, Dourgne, Tarn, France. They may also be obtained through Ducketts, 140 Strand, W.C.2.

ÆLRED SQUIRE, O.P.



## EXTRACTS

LITURGY, the Society of St Gregory's quarterly review (a very good 1/6's worth) in its October issue contains an article on '*My Sacrifice and Yours*', by Dom Edmund Jones, which stresses the reality of unity and community in the Church's public worship.

Our worship is the worship of a community, of a family. The whole of God's approach to man is marked by a bringing into being of order and unity. If we are truly impressed by the divine call to share in his life of unity, of common unity, this will certainly find its outward expression. We need to remember that our parishes as such are visible, concrete exterior manifestations of the community of the Church universal. They are, as St Paul would say, the Church in So-and-So. The universal Church is present in the Christian Community and a breadth of vision of the whole is basic to a real participation in the Mass. We cannot approach it purely as individuals. It is surely not without significance that some of the greatest promoters of the liturgical movement have also dedicated



themselves to work for the reunion of Christians. . . . So, then, a strong accent on order and unity; not a rigid regimentation destructive of life and spontaneity, but a living order.

Later in the article, which goes on to consider practical ways of bringing about this living unity through the liturgy, the author asks for a revision of our attitude to the use of the missal.

If our people are to spend the time at Mass reading to themselves texts, however liturgical and however identical with those being said by the priest, they can hardly be said to be sharing in the Mass in the fullest sense. Thirty people reading each for themselves in their own book a text, even if it corresponds with the text which is being read aloud, cannot be said to be listening totally to what is being proclaimed for them by the persons deputed to this office.

PÈRE YVES CONGAR, O.P. in *New Life* (Sept./Oct., the Y.C.W. journal for priests, price 3s.) approaches this question of unity from the point of view of the apostolate. The old problem of whether the Christian today should 'muck in' with the world around, or should 'muck out', is posed almost as the dilemma for the apostle, to be united with those to whom he is sent or united with the Church by whom he is sent. Père Congar shows the errors in both extremes, but we quote only from the picture of the second:

At the opposite extreme, a person could be deeply penetrated with the feeling that the Church is something other than the world, that she is an order set apart with her own laws, her own way of life, and with her demands not only for the deeper life, but for social behaviour. At the same time, he would not feel like a searing burn the outcry of the immense world of man. Such a man would observe Catholic regulations very punctiliously—if he were a priest, for instance, the wearing of his cassock, saying his breviary, the slightest prescriptions of canon law, the strictest and safest theological formulations: all excellent things, certainly, and it would not be easy to find, either in my life or my writings, one word deprecating them—but in short such a man would be a faithful minister of the Church as a body set apart, but he would have little anxiety about bringing back men who are alienated. . . . In a word, he would be a man of an order of sanctity set apart, not of an order of catholicity.

The author concludes his remarks by applying his distinction to the worker-priests. But the distinction is applicable to the spiritual lives of many of us, who are anxious to save our own soul and remain unsullied by the world, but who are less anxious to let the light shine into the darkness, to penetrate the world with the ray of Christ's life.

## REVIEWS

THE LIVING BREAD. By Thomas Merton. (Burns & Oates; 12s. 6d.)

Father Merton's latest book does not at first sight appear to share those qualities which up to now have been popularly associated with his writings. Here is a plain statement of the Church's teaching about the Blessed Sacrament and it would seem too much to expect 'inspirational writing' and the similar qualities that have been singled out for praise in his earlier books. Nevertheless it is with justice that his publishers claim to find 'radiant contagious joy' in *The Living Bread*. This is not a flamboyant quality; it does not spring from qualities of imagination or style so much as from a deep-rooted and strong personal love of our Lord. At first it is difficult to detect where the radiance comes from: the style of the writing is quiet and restrained; thought is strictly disciplined; even illustrations of points of doctrine are never far-fetched or elaborate. On reflection the reader is compelled to believe that he is sharing the happiness of the writer and there is nothing more to it than that. Yet there is just one thing. The first words of the Prologue are, 'Christianity is more than a doctrine. It is Christ himself living in those whom he has united to himself in one Mystical Body.' Is this perhaps a key to Father Merton's quiet happiness in theology? He is not so much writing to teach as performing a labour of love, speaking from the fullness of his heart. He is writing about a Person, not about an idea or a theory, though his book is learned enough and he can quote the Fathers and teachers of the Church when the need arises. His enthusiasm is controlled by the traditional teaching of the Church and the book falls into four main parts: God's love for man which prompted him to give himself in the Eucharist; the Sacrifice of the Mass; the Sacrament; our response to these gifts. Hence this is a book valuable both for meditation and study and above all for systematic meditation. The style is contemporary, the illustrations, applications and problems are all of our own times, and it is no faint praise to say that this book can occupy a place on our shelves beside Abbot Vonier's classic on the same subject.

GERARD MEATH, O.P.

THE BLESSED SACRAMENT AND THE MASS. By St Thomas Aquinas.  
Translated by Rev. F. O'Neill. (Blackfriars; 10s. 6d.)

Blackfriars have republished Father O'Neill's work which was first brought out by Pepler and Sewell in 1935. For those who do not already know the book its chief merits may be noted. The explanation of philosophical terms in the general introduction is admirably brief and

clear; the translation too is precise and clear-cut; and, perhaps most noticeable of all, Father O'Neill has had the courage to arrange the articles of St Thomas's *Summa* in a fashion we find easier to follow these days, that is to say, the body of the article is set out first and then the objections are taken and answered one by one. He selects for translation St Thomas's teachings on the matter and form of the sacrament, the meaning of transubstantiation, and the ministry and use of the sacrament. There are appendices on the nature of immolation in the Mass and notes on quantity, accidents, etc. Altogether this is a reasonably complete study of the doctrine of the Holy Eucharist which should be welcome to students and laymen of all ages, especially as it fits so easily into the pocket.

GERARD MEATH, O.P.

THE RULE OF ST AUGUSTINE. Commentary by Blessed Alphonsus Orocozco, O.S.A. Translation by Rev. Thomas A. Hand, O.S.A. (Gill; 8s. 6d.)

Dominicans are accustomed to hearing the Rule read in the refectory once a week and thus soon get to know it almost by heart both in Latin and English. It must therefore be a tribute to the translator that even a cursory reading of this new version brings to new life what is already old and familiar. Not that the version is noticeably 'modern' in any of the variety of meanings people give to that word, but it is simple and direct, and those are perennial virtues. Here is a first-rate example: 'Do not say that anything is your own, but let everything be possessed as property common to all'. It is clear and no one can have any doubt about its meaning. The Rule of Saint Augustine is the foundation of the constitutions of so many religious orders and congregations that one must give this book a big welcome. The commentary by a Spanish Augustinian father who lived almost through the whole of the sixteenth century is also straightforward and direct and is chiefly distinguished for the fact that it passes quickly over less universal points, such as taking a companion to the public baths, and spends most time on the fundamentals of religious life, charity, prayer, and the three vows.

GERARD MEATH, O.P.

AN INTRODUCTION TO CONTEMPLATIVE MEDITATION. By F. D. Joret, O.P. (Blackfriars; 3s. 6d.)

Father Joret's method first catches the eye in this little book. He starts with the first person singular: what does it mean to be recollected? what is my relationship to God, i.e. the divine presence around us and the image of God in my soul?, and so he slowly draws us out of our-



selves to consider the wisdom and love of God and finally the Holy Trinity. Father Joret is a most attractive writer and has a very lively way of presenting the toughest truths without any dilution. On spiritual recollection he is particularly good; explains the hard work that must go into prayer, the stages that people can expect to go through, and very clearly distinguishes all this from graces that are quite commonly received in prayer. But beyond all that I think this book has a quality that might easily be overlooked: it *makes* the reader do some contemplation. In a guileless sort of way the mechanics of recollection are explained; naturally we are interested and begin to wonder what is behind all this, and so we are led to read about the presence of God and so gradually to a thoughtful speculation about God himself. The point is that we find ourselves breaking off and reflecting as we read. A very clever book.

GERARD MEATH, O.P.

ST IGNATIUS LOYOLA: THE PILGRIM YEARS. By James Brodrick, S.J. (Burns Oates; 30s.)

This book is Father Brodrick's contribution to the celebration of the 400th anniversary of the death of St Ignatius. In it we are taken from 1491, year of the saint's birth, to 1538, when he celebrated his first Mass in Rome. In that year international strife prevented the nascent Company of Jesus from setting out for the Holy Land, as the vow of Montmartre obliged them to do if transport were forthcoming within the year. It was not, and the pope indicated Rome as their Jerusalem. For Ignatius the years of roaming were over and Providence was to bring it about that from being the rallying point of a group of like-minded friends he became the founder and superior general of a new religious order. With all that the present work does not concern itself. It stops short at the point where, in the words of one of the more staid of St Ignatius' sons, the Founder became 'respectable'. No more falling in rivers or riding donkeys!

The earlier part of the life of St Ignatius is, naturally, the least well known. The saint was scarcely forthcoming on the details of it, and other sources are few and far between. All the more reason to be grateful to Father Brodrick. In his hands the search for information becomes a lively affair. As usual the book abounds in delicious asides and footnotes. We learn, for instance, that a graduate of Salamanca had to provide both banquet and bullfight for the professors. A doctor of theology, however, got away with a mere cockfight! (pp. 203-4, Note). The will of the saint's brother, Martin Garcia, directs his executors to hire persons to fast for 300 days 'in reparation for the days when I should have fasted and did not'. Even in our own day this might well suggest an opening for some enterprising person!

Many will find particularly interesting the account given of life in the University of Paris during the second half of the sixteenth century with its clash between humanists and scholastics and the desire, on the part of some, to 'return to the sources'. We seem to have heard it all before, much more recently. The description of Noel Beda, 'a theologian on horseback, booted and spurred, who lumped together Erasmus, Lefevre d'Etaples, and Guillaume Bude (who only asked to be allowed to settle hoti's business) as arians, donatists, hussites, and disguised lutherans' seems familiar. Integristes and progressistes were already confronting one another in the sixteenth century. St Ignatius showed himself a true Catholic by following the *via media*.

Never, perhaps, has the world in which St Ignatius was born and in which he followed his wonderful vocation been so vividly portrayed. It follows, naturally, that the central figure stands out all the more lovable and understandable for it. Moreover in these pages the famous Spiritual Exercises with which St Ignatius enriched Christian spirituality are seen in the setting in which they were first made and certain misconceptions about them are gently put aside.

The book is an outstanding contribution to hagiography, but even to those who have no interest in St Ignatius and the Jesuits it is an important contribution to our knowledge of life in France and Spain, and especially university life, at the end of the fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth centuries.

RICHARD BLUNDELL, S.J.

THE DOCTRINAL INSTRUCTION OF RELIGIOUS SISTERS. (Blackfriars Publications; 13s. 6d.)

This volume is the sixth to be translated of the series 'Problèmes de la religieuse d'aujourd'hui'. Like the others it consists of a series of papers read to a group of priests and nuns in Paris. It deals with the question of the sort of doctrinal instruction which should be given to religious women. That such instruction is necessary, but that in fact it is not always given, is the theme of the extremely interesting paper by Sister Jeanne d'Arc, O.P., which opens the series. She underlines the advantages of a thorough knowledge of the Faith and deals with certain specious, but all too common, objections to study. The whole of this chapter will repay careful reading. In particular the author points out that nuns have been obliged by modern circumstances to pursue studies to a high level in profane subjects and that it would be strange if the knowledge of divine things were the only science from which they were to be debarred.

Father Beyer, S.J., discusses woman's role in the Church at the present time as set forth in the teaching of H.H. Pope Pius XII, and in particular the responsibility of modern woman in religious life. Here is a mine of

wisdom and here too can be found the highest authority for many propositions still regarded by some as daring innovations. It would have been a help if the references could have been given from the AAS or the *Clergy Review* rather than from the *Documentation Catholique*, which must be accessible to few among English-speaking readers.

Chapter III is a paper by Father de Lestapis, S.J., on the promotion of woman in the modern world. The examples and statistics concern France and one might query the wisdom of leaving this chapter in the English edition. At first sight one might be tempted to make the same remark about Chapter V on the adaptation of secondary and university courses of men to the teaching of women by a Religious of the Sacred Heart, but in fact the chapter is one of the most valuable in the whole book. Though the problems are discussed and solutions proposed in a French context, there is much here to interest educators in English-speaking lands. There is also a paper on doctrinal training of contemplatives. The whole collection is worthy of a place in our libraries alongside its predecessors.

RICHARD BLUNDELL, S.J.

JESUS THE SAVIOUR. By Fr James, O.F.M.CAP. (Gill & Sons; 12s. 6d.)

Fr James may have written a better book than this. If so, I have yet to read it. This one is certainly better than anything of his I have yet read or scanned and does more to justify the huge proportions of his public.

It is, first of all, written, nearly all, with a fine economy of words which seems to suggest an increased facility in the marshalling of thoughts: and his thoughts are worth marshalling. It is scriptural, it is thomistic, it is easy reading. In short, it is a substantial and palatable spiritual reading book recommendable to anyone who desires to dwell upon the chief themes of our holy faith and will not be put off by an occasional obscurely technical phrase.

The main subjects are the love of God as shown in the Incarnation, the meaning of the life and work of St John the Baptist, Transfiguration, Redemption, Ascension. The chapter on Redemption is masterly, but will be best appreciated by those who have a little theological reading behind them. There is something inspiring in the chapter on the Ascension. The chapter on St John the Baptist is outstandingly good as a devotional and scriptural sketch. Not the least valuable part of this valuable book is the first chapter entitled 'Incarnation' which might be sub-titled 'In praise of St Thomas Aquinas'.

G. M. CORR, O.S.M.

THE GIFT OF ONESELF. By Joseph Schryvers, C.S.S.R. (Longmans; 9s. 6d.)

This reasonably priced presentation of a well-known work on self-



surrender, abandonment, moment-by-moment holiness, is another triumph by Longmans in their recent endeavour to popularize worthwhile books of spirituality. The book first appeared in English in 1934. The present translation, done by a Religious of Carmel Bettendorf, Iowa, wisely retains the French atmosphere, sometimes even the idiom, of the original. No one could really anglicize this piece of sanctity *à la française*.

The simple universal principle, 'Doing God's will, here and now, is sanctity', is systematically reiterated throughout the book, and applied to many factors, situations, attitudes, of ordinary people's ordinary search for holiness. The effect is rather over-stimulating. There are passages that suggest a sort of unreasoning reliance on one's own immediate inspiration. A few paragraphs, out of the context at least, could be quoted as over-simplification or exaggerations. But this is true, I think, of nearly all French books of spirituality. It is a pity. I suppose the French man-in-the-street is as immune to these things as we are to our prized illogicalities. The remedy is, as in this book, to keep the translation as French as possible, and perhaps to insist on some sort of explanatory preface in which obviously disconcerting phrases could be put in perspective. This treasurable book of Fr Schryvers, almost entirely free of such phrases, deserved the modicum of annotation which would have made it a perfect book for English readers as well as French ones.

G. M. CORR, O.S.M.

MAN OF FIRE. By Malachy Gerard Carroll. (Mercier Press; 12s. 6d.)

This is rather a collection of essays than a straight life. The subject is Father d'Alzon, who was born at Le Vigan in the Midi on August 30th, 1810.

Emmanuel d'Alzon came of an aristocratic family, cultured and holy, and when we read these character studies of a remarkable son of the Church we cannot help reflecting on the saying that the first school bench for a child is in the arms of its mother. He was nurtured in an atmosphere where vulgarity and mean empty sentiments were unknown; his ancestry had in it the sword always drawn to defend the right and the Church; we are not taken altogether by surprise to find the courage, the strength, the purity and the charity revealed in this account of his life.

The early part of the book is devoted to his upbringing, his studies, his decision to become a priest. At the end of 1828 we meet the first tentative formulation of his master purpose: 'I have discovered my aim. I wish to consecrate myself entirely to the defence of the Church and of religion'—and a few years later: 'As a religious I shall saturate

myself with the ideas of M. de Rancé and I shall remind myself that a religious must be an angel, a martyr, an apostle.'

In Nîmes in 1830 Dr d'Alzon served his apprenticeship. Religion was at its lowest ebb; nuns were a thing of the past; cholera and corruption had become the masters of the people and had done their worst. How strange it must have been for this young priest to have been made an honorary Vicar General straightaway, and to find himself the apostle who had come to revive and to save! How soon the mark of sanctity became obvious in that city; this young zealous priest ready to give away his clothes, to run to the confessional and go to the sick, to love the poor and to preach with a brilliant intellect which touched the hearts and minds of the rich. Through him God, the Sower, gave life to the country. In Chapter VI we see another d'Alzon—the Founder. The foundation of the Fathers of the Assumption comes first, and then, perhaps his life's greatest work, the foundation of the Oblates of the Assumption.

Perhaps through him the challenge of perfection may sound in the ears of many, in England as elsewhere, who sit and muse too long, wondering what God requires of them. 'What is a Founder?' he asks; and he gives the reply: 'When God wills to mould and shape a Founder he takes a man and he fashions him after the manner of the patriarchs . . . the special and extraordinary missions confided to the Founders of Orders are continued by their disciples, always within the Church, always under the authority of the Supreme Pastor. . . .' So through him came the life which flowed into the Congregation he founded, and this life continues today.

Especially interesting to women is the second part of the book devoted to the Oblates. It is fascinating reading, watching d'Alzon fail and fail again, tasting deeply of disappointment, until he found the right woman into whose soul he could inculcate his own desires for the service of God, a woman whom he admired and to whom he gave unstinting loving training and friendship. Who amongst women who waver would not be drawn to dedicate herself to God and cast in her lot with him, reading of the heroic labours of these first Oblates in the Near East and the Balkan States and even in Russia?

A well-written, workmanlike presentation, though occasionally tedious, the book at 12s. 6d. is very successfully produced and is further evidence of the way in which the Mercier Press establishes itself as an 'apostolic press' bringing within the reach of all good material at a reasonable cost.

K. J. BARTLETT

Usage and Liturgy (School Edition). By John F. Sullivan. (Longmans; 6s. 9d.)

This is a revision for the English public of a work long standard in America. It makes an excellent guide to the outlines of Catholic organization, liturgy, devotions, terminology, etc. A number of points have been noticed where improvement would be possible, e.g.: the text might in several cases be more carefully adapted to explain all the points signalized in the clear and useful diagrammatic illustrations; an occasional Latin word could well be substituted by an English one, e.g. *gremiale*; 'the deacon wears a chasuble at Lenten Masses instead of a dalmatic folded up in front' (p. 231) does not give the intended sense; the *Glorias* in the Rosary are a customary adjunct rather than an essential part; it is not prescribed in the Roman Ritual that the candles used at Extreme Unction be blessed; Fr Sebastian Bullough (p. 307) is not a Passionist but a Dominican. In a generally good account of devotion to the Sacred Heart, no mention or explanation is made of the 'great promise'. The reviewer personally finds the constant playing-down of traditional stories rather over-done, e.g. the description of a story on page 275 as 'beautiful but rather fanciful'. But in general this is a useful and pleasing book.

IVO THOMAS, O.P.

THREE WHITE VEILS FOR ALESSANDRA. By Lucy Prario. (Longmans, Green and Co.; 18s.)

The hopes of a dead Cardinal Archbishop of Paris were realized in 1928 when, from Paray-le-Monial, a Carmel was founded on the north side of Montmartre under the shadow of the great white church that dominates the city. 'I shall not regard the Basilica as complete', Cardinal Amette had said, 'until the day comes when in the shadow of our national shrine there arises a centre of prayer, a contemplative monastery.' The Foundress was Mother Mary of Jesus, Alessandra of the three veils, the subject of this unusual biography. Unusual, because at first it seems an ordinary story of a spoiled child becoming a society beauty and making a brilliant marriage.

There were, however, to be three white veils in the life of Alessandra di Rudini, the daughter of a wealthy marchese, an important politician in the new Italy after 1870. The first white veil Alessandra wore at her First Communion; the second white veil she wore at her wedding. The third veil was that of the Carmelite novice. Much happened to Alessandra between the first and second veils; most serious of all, she had ceased to be a practising Catholic. Between the second and third there came motherhood, widowhood and a romantic interlude with d'Annunzio.

A young widow with two adolescent sons, a woman whose defiance



of convention was the talk of Italian society, seemed an improbable subject for the third veil, that of a nun. And this is where Alessandra's biography takes its unusual and unexpected turn. She came back to God and received an imperative call to the Carmelite life. She arranged for the education of her sons, disposed of her affairs and gave up the world. For twenty years she gave her life to God in prayer, in austerity, in suffering. At last, on January 2nd, 1931, Alessandra, now Mother Mary of Jesus, left this world for ever. 'Lord God, we are home' she whispered as she died. It was an arduous journey and it is described for us by Miss Lucy Prario with skill and sympathetic perception. Miss Prario is fortunate in her translator, Mr George Lamb.

KIERAN MULVEY, O.P.

SCIENTIFIC HUMANISM AND CHRISTIAN THOUGHT. By D. Dubarle, O.P. (Blackfriars; 10s. 6d.)

This is a collection of five articles first published in France a few years ago. They deal with the problem raised for Christians by technical advances such as automation in the contemporary world. Cybernetics is given clear treatment in the second article, which also has an interesting account of the theory of games and its possible applications. The remaining articles are rather short and vague over the complex question of how these new techniques will affect our civilization. Work of an occasional nature by a distinguished author is often worth collecting together; it is less often worth the trouble of translating. Too little discrimination is being shown in giving books the permanence of English paper, print, covers and well-designed jacket. We risk being swamped by a flood of books which were never intended to have them.

LAURENCE BRIGHT, O.P.

THE WAY IT WORKED OUT. By G. B. Stern. (Sheed and Ward; 10s. 6d).

This book is a sequel to Miss Stern's story of her conversion, *All in Good Time*, and is described by her publishers as 'an eminent convert's most honest account . . . of what the faith did for her, and what it didn't do'. It is a lighthearted account and consists of a series of musings that produce the cumulative effect of a breathless, and rather pious, monologue. It is thus a patchy book and I found the most entertaining patches to be the stories about little-known saints. For the rest, some recent converts may find it of interest as revealing a community of bewilderment about some Catholic practices; Catholics of longer standing may find interest in the occasional fresh view of such customs.

It would seem, incidentally, to have worked out very well for Miss

Stern in at least one particular, for 'my age', she writes, 'cuts me off automatically from most of the mortal sins'. 'Automatically' and 'most' seem to beg the question.

M.T.

FRANCESCO: A LEGEND. By August Mahr. (Vantage Press, New York; \$3.50.)

This is a caricature of St Francis. The hysterical atmosphere of this book is far removed from the world of the 'Fioretti'. We have here a Hollywood St Francis. We do not know whether or not the author is a Catholic; some of the sentiments he ascribes to Francesco make one suspect that he is not, as also do the opinions voiced by the various ecclesiastics who appear in the story. This surmise is strengthened by the use of the expression 'the sacrament' (with a small 's'; p. 486), and by the naturalistic interpretation of various well-known events in the life of St Francis. Francesco, of course, is supposed to be St Francis of Assisi. The work is one of those semi-fictional productions based on the life of some saint of which several have appeared in recent years. We wonder if the publishers have any sense of humour. They solemnly inform us on the dust-cover that the author's 'publications range from *The Origin of the Greek Tragic Form* (1938) to *The Anatomical Terminology of the Eighteenth-Century Delaware Indians* (1956)'. One wondered whether this would qualify him to write about St Francis; now that one has read the work one knows that it does not.

There are a number of minor errors which confirm one's suspicions that the writer is not at home with his subject. We always understood that a secular priest in Italy is referred to as 'Don', not, as is done here whenever the incumbent of San Damiano is mentioned, as 'Dom'. Some of the place-names are spelt in a way we have not met before, e.g. 'Alverno'; we are accustomed to 'Alverna'. Would a priest expose the Blessed Sacrament all night at the mere request of a layman, even supposing, which we doubt, that exposition was practised in the thirteenth century? Was anybody in those days as keen on bathing as Francesco is made out to be? The conversations are stilted, unnatural, and sententious, couched in language which is a mixture of Victorianism and American slang. We regret that we cannot recommend this book.

FR SEBASTIAN, O.F.M.CAP.